



# Annotated Bibliography

An annotated bibliography is simply a reference list (bibliography) with a note (annotation) for each entry in the list. The purpose is to show that you understand the existing research in your field: its strengths, limitations, and usefulness for a particular project. Therefore, you will usually need to choose a range of relevant sources to annotate.

Depending on the text type, and your assignment requirements, an annotated bibliography will usually include:

- A reference
- A brief summary or description of the research findings
- An evaluation of its usefulness to future research, its strengths, and its limitations
- Sometimes an annotation will also make reference or explain links to other relevant research in the field

## Example

Savolainen, H. (2009). Responding to diversity and striving for excellence: The case of Finland. <i>Quarterly Review of Comparative Education</i> , 39(3), 281-292. doi:10.7007/s-11125-009-9125-y	Reference it
In <b>this article</b> , Savolainen discusses the significance of including and supporting all students in education regardless of their diverse learning needs. He maintains that inclusive education can be challenging because increasing access to comprehensive schooling requires the balance of both “equality” and “quality”. Savolainen’s <b>qualitative investigation</b> into the Finnish school system found that, compared with other countries, Finnish students’ results are consistently above average. This, he argues, has been achieved by policy reform that shifted the focus from standardized testing to the development of literacy and numeracy competence. In fact, by focusing on core skills and nurturing independent learning in a comprehensive environment, Finland is an example of how schools and education authorities can successfully collaborate to promote inclusivity.	Describe it
The <b>main limitation</b> of this article is that the research was conducted in the Finnish education context. However, the findings are <b>still significant</b> because they indicate how a more inclusive environment, combined with a move away from conventional high-stakes testing, can lead to better learning outcomes for a diverse range of students	Evaluate it
This article is therefore <b>useful</b> for a study on learner diversity in Australia because it articulates the importance of, and strategies for, including all students regardless of their diverse learning needs.	Link it

*Adapted from actual student work. Permission to reproduce this work, for this purpose, was received from the student.*

## 1. Reference it

- The first part of an annotation is to provide a full citation for the source you are reviewing. Remember to use the correct referencing style (e.g. APA, MLA, Harvard etc). This will vary from discipline to discipline.

## 2. Describe it

- The first few sentences of your annotated bibliography should introduce the source by including a detailed description and summary of the text.
- This information should include:
  - What type of source it is (i.e. a literature review, a best practice evidence sheet, a chapter from a text book, a cohort study, etc.)?
  - Who has produced the source? Who is the intended audience of the source?
  - What key topics, findings and information the source offers?
  - What evidence or research the source uses to establish its argument or support the key ideas being presented?

## 3. Evaluate it

- The next section of the annotation should provide an evaluation of the quality of the source; this allows you to demonstrate your critical reading and thinking skills.
- The evaluation should comment on any weaknesses or strengths in the source, their evidence and their argument. Is the study limited in some way? Or does it provide a thorough examination and collection of evidence on the topic? Are there any potential biases?

## 4. Link it

- The final component of an annotation will make clear connections between the source and other aspects of your study. This section should build on what has been evaluated.
- The source can be linked to your own learning and research - what does the source contribute to your understanding of this topic? How useful is this source to your own purpose, research and learning?
- The source should also be contextualised by making links to the bigger picture surrounding this topic or area of study. Are there any connections between this source and other research on the topic? Does it connect to clinical practices and policies? What is significant about these connections?